

What You Need to Know About Chronic Disease and Pandemic H1N1 Influenza

PLAN
PREPARE
PRACTICE

www.statehealth.in.gov

The pandemic H1N1 influenza virus has many people worried about their health. While you shouldn't panic, it is important to understand that infections of any kind are a special concern for individuals with chronic disease. Due to your current condition(s), your immune system is weakened, making it harder for your body to fight off pandemic H1N1 influenza virus.

There are certain steps everyone should take to prevent flu transmission:

Avoid close contact. Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

Stay home when you are sick. Stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. Keep sick children at home. You will help prevent others from catching the illness.

Cover your nose and mouth. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

Wash your hands often. Washing your hands and the hands of your children often will help protect you from germs.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

Practice other good health habits. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, abstain from tobacco, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

Get vaccinated. Get a yearly flu vaccine and pneumococcal vaccine. Check with your health care provider prior to receiving it as live vaccines are not recommended.

Individuals with chronic disease are more susceptible to pandemic H1N1 influenza virus, have increased risk for complications, and are strongly encouraged to take extra precautions to avoid flu transmission: talk with your health care provider and develop a plan; keep emergency phone numbers available; update your medical history and have it readily available along with a current list of medications; and maintain a two-week supply of your medications.



Indiana State
Department of Health

Additional actions, specific to your condition, may be necessary to protect you from H1N1:

Asthma

Take CONTROL of Asthma.

- Care for yourself
- Own and use an asthma action plan
- Note peak flow numbers
- Take medicines
- Reduce exposure to triggers
- Open airways
- Live healthy

Cancer

- Recognize that infections of any kind are a special concern during cancer treatment.
- Talk to your doctor about your risk of infection with the pandemic H1N1 influenza virus and follow his/her specific recommendations.

Heart Disease, Stroke, or Cardiovascular Disease

- Do not stop taking your medications without first consulting your health care provider.
- Be alert to changes in your breathing and promptly report any changes to your health care provider.

Kidney Disease (Renal Disease, Kidney Failure, and

Those on Dialysis)

- Talk with your dialysis unit about what you should do if you get sick.
- Make sure you have a diet for sick days and review it with your dietitian, including any dietary changes to make in case you are homebound for a short time or get less dialysis than normal.

Diabetes

- Be sure to continue taking your diabetes pills or insulin. Don't stop taking them even if you can't eat. Your health care provider may even advise you to take more insulin during sickness.
- Test your blood glucose every four hours, and keep track of the results.
- Drink extra (calorie-free) liquids. Water, diet soda pop, or teas without sugar are good choices. Try to eat as you normally would. If you can't, try to have soft foods and liquids containing the equivalent amount of carbohydrates that you usually consume.
- Weigh yourself daily. Losing weight without trying is a sign of high blood glucose.
- Check your temperature every morning and evening. A fever may be a sign of infection.
- Call your health care provider or go to an emergency room if any of the following happen to you:
 - You feel too sick to eat normally and are unable to keep food down for more than six hours.
 - You have severe diarrhea.
 - You lose five pounds or more.
 - Your temperature is over 101°F.
 - Your blood glucose is lower than 60 mg/dL or remains over 300 mg/dL.
 - You have moderate or large amounts of ketones in your urine.
 - You experience trouble breathing.
 - You feel sleepy or can't think clearly.

Resources

- www.cancer.org/docroot/SPC/content/SPC_1_Swine_Flu.asp
- www.cdc.gov/diabetes/pubs/tcyd/ktrack.htm#care
- www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/heart.htm
- www.in.gov/flu/2389.htm
- www.injac.org
- www.kcercoalition.com



Indiana State
Department of Health